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FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR

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INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1242

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 000994

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W

PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU: SANHA WINS SECOND ROUND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

REF: DAKAR 696

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Guinea-Bissau held the second round of its presidential election on July 26 following weeks of campaigning that saw Party for Social Renewal (PRS) candidate Kumba Yala level significant accusations against African Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) candidate Malam Bacai Sanha. All observers, including those from Embassy Dakar, agreed that the election was well organized and technically sound. As had been the case in the first round of voting, turnout was relatively low due in part to recent violence (reftel). Receiving 63 percent of the votes cast, Sanha handily defeated Yala. It has been reported that Yala has announced that he will respect the results of the election. END SUMMARY.

FIRST ROUND RESULTS

¶12. (SBU) On June 28, Guinea-Bissau held its first round of voting in a presidential election to replace its assassinated former president, Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira. Results were announced on July 2, in which Sanha and Yala received the highest numbers of votes cast, with 39.5 percent and 29.5 percent, respectively. Since neither candidate managed to earn a majority of votes cast, a second round of voting was scheduled for July 26 in accordance with the Bissau-Guinean electoral code. Independent candidate Henrique Rosa came in third, with 24 percent, failing to win a spot in the second round.

THE SECOND ROUND CAMPAIGN

¶13. (SBU) Campaigning between Sanha and Yala began soon after the results were announced and continued until July 24, two days before the second round of voting. The campaigning period was peaceful, without any incidents of violence. While some vanquished candidates from the first round threw their support behind Sanha, including fourth-place Iaia Djalo, Rosa pointedly did not publicly throw his support to either candidate. As such, both Sanha and Yala tried to win over Rosa's swing constituency as well as the approximately 40 percent of voters who did not participate in the first round.

¶14. (SBU) During the campaign, Yala publicly challenged Sanha to a debate on matters of state. Sanha, who characterized their last debate in the run-up to the 2000 as a the debacle, refused.

¶15. (SBU) In a meeting with PolCouns on July 24, the CNE President said that security would be increased for the second round and would remain in place until after the second round results are announced. The CNE President also admitted that first round participation was lower than had been expected but that the CNE was engaged in a "get out the vote" campaign in advance of the second round. Both candidates also stressed the need for first round abstainers to vote in their campaign speeches.

YALA'S ACCUSATIONS

¶16. (SBU) Even though the campaign was peaceful, Yala leveled a number of accusations at Sanha and the PAIGC, including alleging massive electoral fraud, and at one point even accusing them of having received Al Qaeda financing and a secret agenda of Islamic fundamentalism. (NOTE: Many Rosa supporters are Catholic and wary of Islam's growing influence in Guinea-Bissau. END NOTE.)

¶17. (SBU) On July 24 PolCouns and the Canadian Dakar-based Guinea-Bissau watcher met with both Yala and his campaign manager, Baltazar Cardoso, Yala claimed that the National Electoral Commission (CNE) is "in conspiracy" with the PAIGC to rig the elections. He claimed that in recent elections, such as the November 2008 legislative elections, ballot boxes did not arrive in Balanta areas until 3pm on the day of voting, while in other regions, voting was allowed for up to three days. (NOTE: The Balanta are Guinea-Bissau's largest ethnic group, comprising around 30 percent of the population. Balanta voters are the PRS's core constituency. END NOTE.) According to Yala, results were fabricated in the country's most remote regions, where international observers supposedly do not go.

¶18. (SBU) Yala claimed that PRS members had caught children voting illegally in the first round of the presidential election, and that they had caught people with second round ballots pre-marked in support of Sanha in advance of the second round. He claimed that the PAIGC gives voters pre-marked ballots (ostensibly provided by the CNE) and 10,000 CFA (approximately USD 21). Voters hide the pre-marked ballot, vote, bring back the unmarked ballot from the

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polling station, and are given an additional 10,000 CFA. Additionally, Yala claimed that the PAIGC are buying electoral cards and giving them to their supporters. (COMMENT: While there may be some of this dubious activity going on, we find it unlikely that any such activity would occur on a scale that would alter the election result. There is no evidence to suggest that any of Yala's accusations are true. END COMMENT.)

¶19. (SBU) Cardoso insisted that he has proof of Al Qaeda's involvement in the PAIGC. He claimed that former Bissau-Guinean intelligence officials have been working with the PRS and say that Al Qaeda is not only present in Guinea-Bissau but working with the PAIGC. In his opinion, nobody notices these Al Qaeda members because the international community believes members of Al Qaeda are all "white," while in fact Al Qaeda has black members in Guinea-Bissau. He claimed to have proof of this involvement and offered to share it at a "later time" in secret, but not publicly.

ELECTION DAY

¶15. (SBU) The election took place without incident and was well-organized, well-executed, and without any notable tension. PolCouns and EmbOffs observed the balloting in Bissau, Mansoa, Bissora, Bafata, Gabu, and surrounding rural areas. U.S. Embassy observers did not notice any dubious or fraudulent activities. The presence of candidates' representatives at all polling stations for the entire day, from the opening of polls to the counting of votes, helped to minimize irregularities. Additionally, observers from the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), la Francophonie, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and the European Union (EU), as well as Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom agreed that the election proceeded in a smooth and transparent manner, void of any significant irregularities.

¶16. (SBU) Although voting proceeded smoothly, voter turnout remained relatively low by historical standards, much as it had during the first round of elections. Voter turnout for the second round was estimated to be approximately 61 percent.

ELECTION RESULTS

17. (SBU) On July 27, United Nations (UN) Representative of the Security General (RSG) Joseph Mutaboba held a meeting with Heads of Delegation of the various electoral observation missions including the EU, AU, ECOWAS, the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Nations), La Francophonie, UEMOA (the West African Economic and Monetary Union), Canada, Japan, the U.K, and the United States. At the meeting Mutaboba announced that before the election he had brokered the signing of a memorandum of understanding between both candidates regarding recognition of official results and a commitment to strictly legal recourses for contesting the result.

18. (SBU) On July 29, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) announced the official results. Sanha received 224,259 votes cast, or 63.31 percent. Yala garnered 129,963 votes, or 36.69 percent. Strikingly, Sanha won 8 of Guinea-Bissau's 9 electoral regions, even managing to defeat Yala in the Balanta-heavy Oio region. Yala conceded defeat and congratulated Sanha.

19. (SBU) Comment: Many observers were concerned that Yala would refuse to recognize the results and attempt some form of extra-constitutional method to become president, including the possibility of engineering a coup d'etat with the support of Balanta military officers. While today this scenario seems less likely, it should not be completely discounted given the history of the country as well as more recent events.

SMITH